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C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 001330

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [UP](#) [RS](#)  
SUBJECT: MAYOR NON GRATA: MOSCOW REACTS

Classified By: PolOff Bob Patterson. Reasons 1.4 (B/D).

¶1. (U) Amid ample press reports on "Mayor Non Grata," the MFA issued a statement on May 12, expressing puzzlement over Ukraine's decision to bar Moscow Mayor Yuriy Luzhkov from entering Ukraine, following his speech during the May 12 celebrations of the 225th anniversary of the Russian Black Sea Fleet (BSF) in Sevastopol. Despite "repeated" warnings by Ukrainian authorities, Luzhkov had delivered a speech asserting Russia's state right to the naval base. The MFA statement claimed that Luzhkov had been "unjustifiably" accused of infringing on Ukraine's sovereignty. Praising Luzhkov's work to "actively support" relations between the two countries, the MFA stated that he had merely expressed the view of most Russians who regarded the break-up of the Soviet Union painfully. The MFA criticized the GOU for re-creating black lists to deny Russians the right to comment on their common history. The MFA statement concluded that the Ukrainian decision was an "unfriendly step" at odds with efforts to improve the bilateral relationship.

¶2. (C) MFA Second CIS Department Director Viktor Sorokin underscored to us May 13 that Russia stood by Ukraine's territorial integrity, which included Crimea. The future of the BSF would be decided by the intergovernmental BSF Subcommission, not by the Moscow Mayor, he said. Sorokin thought that the Mayor's speech did not merit such a sweeping "emotional" decision made by the GOU.

¶3. (C) Experts' views on Luzhkov's behavior were mixed but many agreed that Sevastopol remained a Russian city within Ukrainian territory. Artyom Malgin of the Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO) recalled the Mayor's February 2007 "provocation." At a demonstration in Sevastopol, Luzhkov said that a clumsy process had torn Sevastopol and Crimea from Russia. As a populist politician, Luzhkov always catered to the popular sentiment that Crimea was "mistakenly" given to Ukraine by Nikita Khurushchev, he added. Malgin said that Ukraine's aspirations for NATO entry had heightened the sensitivity toward the "lost" territory among certain groups of politicians and the public. Deputy Director of the CIS Institute Vladimir Zharikhin, however, said that any country would react the way Ukraine did toward a foreign politician who consistently ignored the warnings and continued provocative behavior.

¶4. (U) All major media reported Ukraine's decision vis-a-vis the Moscow Mayor's latest rant about Russian interests in Crimea. Many cited his comments in detail. The daily Kommersant stated that the Moscow Mayor's "initiative" to reclaim Sevastopol would remain a personal one and nothing more. Vremya Novostey quoted Konstantin Zatulin, a Duma deputy, who accompanied Luzhkov, as saying, "If Ukraine chooses to abrogate the agreement, we would be involuntarily forced to re-examine Sevastopol's status."

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